



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

#### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release to PM's MONDAY OCTOBER 28, 1946

#### PRODUCTION OF CANNED FISH SHOWS DECLINE

Because of extremely low production in several of the major fisheries, the pack of canned fish in the United States and Alaska during the first nine months of 1946 was eight percent below last year, Milton C. James, Assistant Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today.

By September 30, the pack of canned fish, except for miscellaneous small items not yet tabulated, amounted to 386,580,600 pounds. On the same date last year, 421,592,700 pounds had been packed.

The decline has occurred in spite of high production in the fisheries for California tuna and Maine sardines, and is largely due to the failure of the Alaska salmon fishery, the albacore fishery off the coasts of Washington and Oregon, and the pacific sardine fishery, Mr. James said.

Although some of the deficit might be made up in fisheries that are still operating during the balance of the year, there is little chance that production will equal that of 1945 unless there is an unexpected improvement in fishing for Pacific sardines, which has been notably poor in northern California waters, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Only about half as many sardines have been packed on the West Coast as last year. The pack to the end of September was 760,275 cases, compared with 1,492,441 cases for the same period in 1945. This figure represents production during January, February, August, and September, the period from March 1 through July being a closed season in this fishery.

The Alaska salmon industry had one of the poorest seasons in its history, the pack falling to the lowest level since 1927. When the season closed in September, the total pack was only 3,879,955 cases. In 1945, also a poor year for this industry, 4,350,471 cases were packed. During the preceding 10-year period, production of Alaska salmon had varied from five to eight million cases.

The salmon pack on the northwestern coast of the United States, while only slightly below the 1945 level, continued a downward trend which has been evident since 1941. The 1946 pack to the end of September was 516,729 cases, compared with approximately 550,000 cases for the equivalent period of 1945.

In contrast to these low yields, the California tuna fishery, third largest on the Pacific coast, seemed likely to enjoy a record-breaking year. The pack for the first nine months of 1946 was 3,596,817 cases—almost as much as was packed during the whole of 1945—and 35 percent above production for the same period last year. The largest pre-war pack of California tuna was 4,162,336 cases, in 1940, and present indications are that the 1946 pack will considerably exceed this figure.

Despite the excellent tuna catches by California boats, the albacore, a white-meated tuna, was mysteriously scarce in the northern waters where it has supported a fishery since 1937. Landings of this tuna at Astoria were the smallest in the history of the fishery; receipts at other ports in Oregon and Washington were correspondingly low. The northern pack of albacore this year, as a result, was little better than 10 percent of the quantity packed from the 1945 catch.

After a discouraging early season pack, the Maine sardine fishery made a sudden spurt in August and September and by the end of the latter month had exceeded last year's production for the first three quarters of the year. The pack as of September 30 was 2,123,222 cases, compared with 1,953,216 cases to September 30, 1945.

Production of canned sea herring in Maine showed little change compared with last year: 75,240 cases as against 78,500 in 1945. The pack of Atlantic mackerel,

on the other hand, was 203,949 cases—about four times the 1945 production. The canning of mackerel is concentrated at Gloucester and in several Maine ports.

Since the peak of the Pacific mackerel season comes in the last quarter of the year, it is too early to judge the trend of this fishery. However, the pack to the end of September was 195,225 cases, an increase of about 55,000 cases over last year.

Although still below the pre-war normal, the pack of shrimp on the South Atlantic and Gulf coasts totaled 168,209 cases by September 30, compared with 88,190 last year. During the war very little shrimp was canned because of the price situation and the difficulty of obtaining canning materials.

XXX